

# Drought halts shipping on China's Yangtze

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Chinese fishing boats are seen stranded a dried up river bank along the Yangtze river. Drought on the massive waterway has led to historically low water levels that have forced authorities to halt shipping, the government and media said Thursday.

Drought on China's Yangtze river has led to historically low water levels that have forced authorities to halt shipping on the nation's longest waterway, the government and media said Thursday.

The water level along the lower reaches of the river near the city of Wuhan was just above three metres (10 feet) on Thursday, the Chang Jiang Waterway Bureau said on its website.

A day earlier, the bureau closed a 228-kilometre (140-mile) stretch above Wuhan to ocean-going vessels due to shallow water in an effort to prevent the ships from bottoming out.

Further up the river, the massive Three Gorges Dam, the world's biggest hydroelectric project, has discharged more water to alleviate the [drought conditions](#) down river, state press reported.

It was not immediately clear if the measures would be effective, as the drought along the middle reaches has sent [water levels](#) to their lowest point in five decades, the China Daily said.

At least two ships have been stranded in recent days as dozens of emergency teams have been dispatched to prevent accidents along the middle reaches, where the river has shrunk to an average width of about 150 metres, it said.

According to Wang Jingquan of the [Yangtze River](#) Water Resources Committee, damming up the river at the controversial Three Gorges Dam has aggravated the drought by diverting [water flow](#) to the lower reaches, the paper said.

The 6,300-kilometre Yangtze is China's longest waterway and is indispensable to the economies of many cities along its route.

The drought has left 400,000 people in Hubei province without drinking water and has threatened nearly 870,000 hectares (2.15 million acres) of farmland in the grain-growing region, the paper said.

October to May is normally the dry season along the river and ocean-going ships are only allowed to go up river past Wuhan at the end of April when the rainy season usually begins, state media said.

"Even though [heavy rains](#) are expected in coming months, it's possible they won't raise the water level much," the China Daily quoted Wu Heping, director of the Wuhan waterway bureau, as saying.

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